606 PURLEY WAY, CROYDON, GREATER LONDON

NGR: TQ 3111 6395 (centred)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRIP AND RECORD EXCAVATION

Report No. 403

March 2005

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SUMMARY

From 8th to 14th March 2005 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological strip and record survey on land at 606 Purley Way, Croydon, Greater London (NGR: TQ 3111 6395, centred) (Figure 1). The work was commissioned by Daniel Griffin of LDA Ltd on behalf of Hillview (Croydon) Ltd.

The archaeological works comprised the excavation of an area measuring 60m by 30m. The project followed on from an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology in 2003 (Foundations, 2003) in which possible archaeological features were encountered in Trench 1. The survey area was based around this trench.

The archaeological programme of works revealed that the eastern half of the site was densely packed with small, sub-circular/oval post-hole-like features. The spatial pattern of the features was random and all the features contained a fill clean of artefactual or ecofactual evidence. Following consultation with Mark Stevenson of GLAAS and Matthew Canti of English Heritage, it was clear that the features were of natural origin and part of the same class of feature as solution pipes, often found in chalk

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GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Archaeology

For the purpose of this project archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site, in this case, chalk.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level.

OS

Ordnance Survey

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 From 8th to 14th March 2005 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological strip and record excavation on land at 606 Purley Way, Croydon, Greater London (NGR: TQ 3111 6395, centred) (Figure 1). The work was commissioned by Daniel Griffin of LDA Ltd on behalf of Hillview (Croydon) Ltd.

1.2 It is proposed to construct a new development at the site. The site falls within an area of archaeological potential, therefore an archaeological condition has been applied to the planning permission (04/04320/P) in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (PPG16) (DoE 1990) and Policy SP6 of the London Borough of Croydon Unitary Development Plan (1997). The Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) of English Heritage required that the area of the site believed to contain archaeological features should be subject to archaeological investigation.

1.3 The project followed on from an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology in 2003 (Foundations, 2003) in which possible archaeological features were encountered in Trench 1. The current project involved the excavation of an area measuring 60m by 30m, situated around Trench 1.

1.4 The works were undertaken in accordance with a Project Design prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2005), approved by Mark Stevenson of GLAAS (English Heritage). The project was undertaken in accordance with all appropriate standards and guidance papers.

1.5 This document presents the findings of the archaeological programme of strip and record excavation.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1 The works covered by this project were undertaken as part of an application to construct 20 new two-storey industrial units with associated access road and car-parking. A condition requiring an archaeological programme of strip and record was attached to the planning permission due to the position of the site within an area of archaeological potential and to the presence of possible archaeological features identified during the archaeological evaluation (Foundations 2003). The evaluation comprised the excavation of three trenches. Trench 1 contained eleven post-hole type features. These were not associated with any cultural material and may have been of natural origin. No archaeological finds or features were present in Trenches 2 and 3.

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2.2 Prior to commencement of the project the study area consisted of modern built environment, which had been recently demolished. The study area was flat and the base geology consists of Chalk.

2.3 The site therefore contained the potential for the preservation of archaeological remains, possibly associated with the Prehistoric period.

3 AIMS

3.1 The aims of the archaeological monitoring were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains.

3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:

i) to define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site and to date these where possible;

ii) to attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;

iii) to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 The groundworks involved the excavation of an area measuring 60m by 30m, centred around Trench 1 of the archaeological evaluation (Foundations 2003). On arrival at the site, the Tarmac and concrete had already been stripped off, and services removed by the demolition contractors. Thereafter, non-significant overburden was removed to the top of archaeological deposits or natural, whichever was encountered first. This was achieved with the use of a mechanical excavator with a toothless grading bucket working under constant archaeological supervision. The area was then hand-cleaned where appropriate. Spoil tips were scanned for unstratified finds across the entire study area.

4.2 The area was planned at an appropriate scale. Detailed plans are held in the archive but are not reproduced in this report. A single feature was sampled.

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5 RESULTS

5.1 The area was excavated onto natural deposits of chalk with flint, encountered at an average depth of 0.30m (58.75m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural ground sloped gently up from 58.47m OD at the eastern end of the site to 59.08m OD at the western end of the site. Up to 0.45m of overburden was removed from the northern side of the site and 0.22m was removed from the southern side.

5.2 The natural deposits were overlain by a black hardcore layer, 0.22m to 0.45m deep except at the extreme east end of the area where the natural was cut away by the footings and service trenches of a recently demolished, modern building. The site was disturbed by a few modern service trenches, scattered across the area.

5.3 The excavations revealed approximately 500 small, sub-circular, sub-oval and amorphous features measuring 0.15m to 0.30m in diameter. These were situated in the eastern half of the study area; the western half of the area contained no features. The features did not form a continuous spread, but were situated in densely packed 'groups' (Figure 2). The spatial pattern of the features did not form any cohesive pattern and appeared to be entirely random.

5.4 The vast majority, approximately 97%, of the features contained a light orange brown sand with occasional small, sub-angular flint nodule inclusions. The remaining features were filled with a dark orange brown clay. Neither fill type of feature contained any visible artefactual or ecofatual evidence. A single feature was excavated as a sample. It measured 0.25m in diameter and 0.17m in depth, had near vertical sides and a narrow base. It was filled with dark orange brown clay.

5.5 A further feature, in the shape of a rough right-angled gully was situated against the central part of the northern edge of the study area. It contained the same sand fill as the majority of the sub-circular features. Investigation of this feature showed that it undercut the natural chalk and was therefore natural in origin.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 The archaeological programme of works revealed that the eastern half of the site was densely packed with small, sub-circular/oval post-hole-like features. The spatial pattern of the features was random and all the features contained a clean sand or clay fill. No artefactual or ecofactual evidence was visible. Following consultation with Mark Stevenson of GLAAS (English Heritage) and Matthew Canti of English Heritage, it was clear that the features were of natural origin and part of the same class of feature as solution pipes, often found in chalk (see Appendix 1). In addition, geological mapping of the area showed that the site had once been covered with Thanet sand (Tertiary), which would explain the sandy

fill of the features. Although the features appeared to be randomly spaced, there had clearly been some unidentified natural process in effect which caused them to form in certain areas. The linear feature was also clearly of natural origin as it contained an identical, clean, sandy fill. This was probably formed when the drift geology filled a geological fracture in the chalk.

6.2 The strip and record survey revealed an absence of archaeological activity within the study area. The archaeological potential of the site is, therefore, nil.

6.3 The archive will be deposited with the Museum of London Archaeological Archive under accession code PUC02.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Quality Assurance
This Documaent has been Prepared and Checked in accordance with AMS's Quality Proceedure (BS EN ISO 9001: 2000)
Author
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Approved
QA Checked

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APPENDIX 1:
GEOARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT

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Geoarchaeological note on features at Purley Way, Croydon.

M.G.Canti English Heritage, Fort Cumberland, Fort Cumberland Road, Eastney, Portsmouth, PO4 9LD. mcanti@eng-h.gov.uk

The site was visited on the 14th March 2005 with staff from Foundations Archaeology. Previous evaluation work had uncovered some small (20cm-50cm) sand or clay filled features which could have been either postholes or natural. Those that had been excavated were free of finds.

Further stripping revealed a large area densely covered in these features. Although they are particularly small and numerous at this site, they are clearly part of the class of features that include the large solution pipes regularly found on chalk sites. The lack of finds, generally random layout, and Tertiary fill make this the only reasonable explanation. In addition, examination of the geological map suggested that the chalk at the site had once had a covering of Thanet sand (Tertiary) which would explain the rather coarse nature of the fills.

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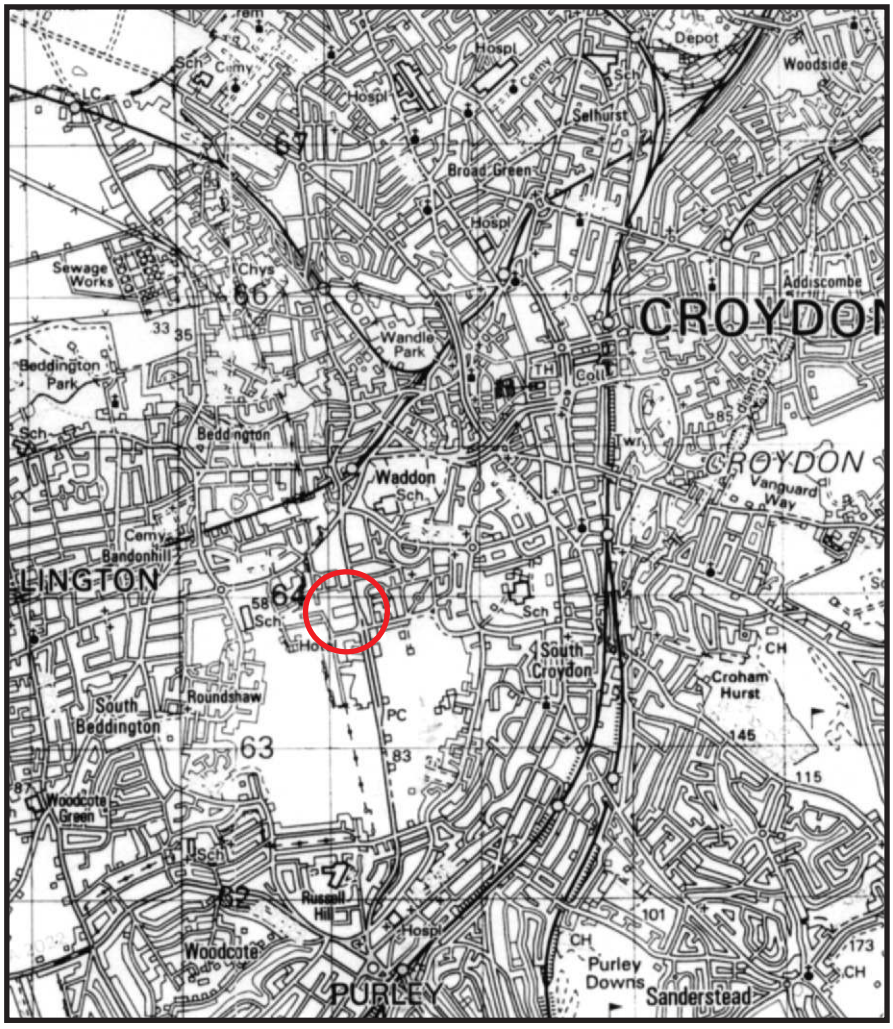

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FIGURE 1: Site Location

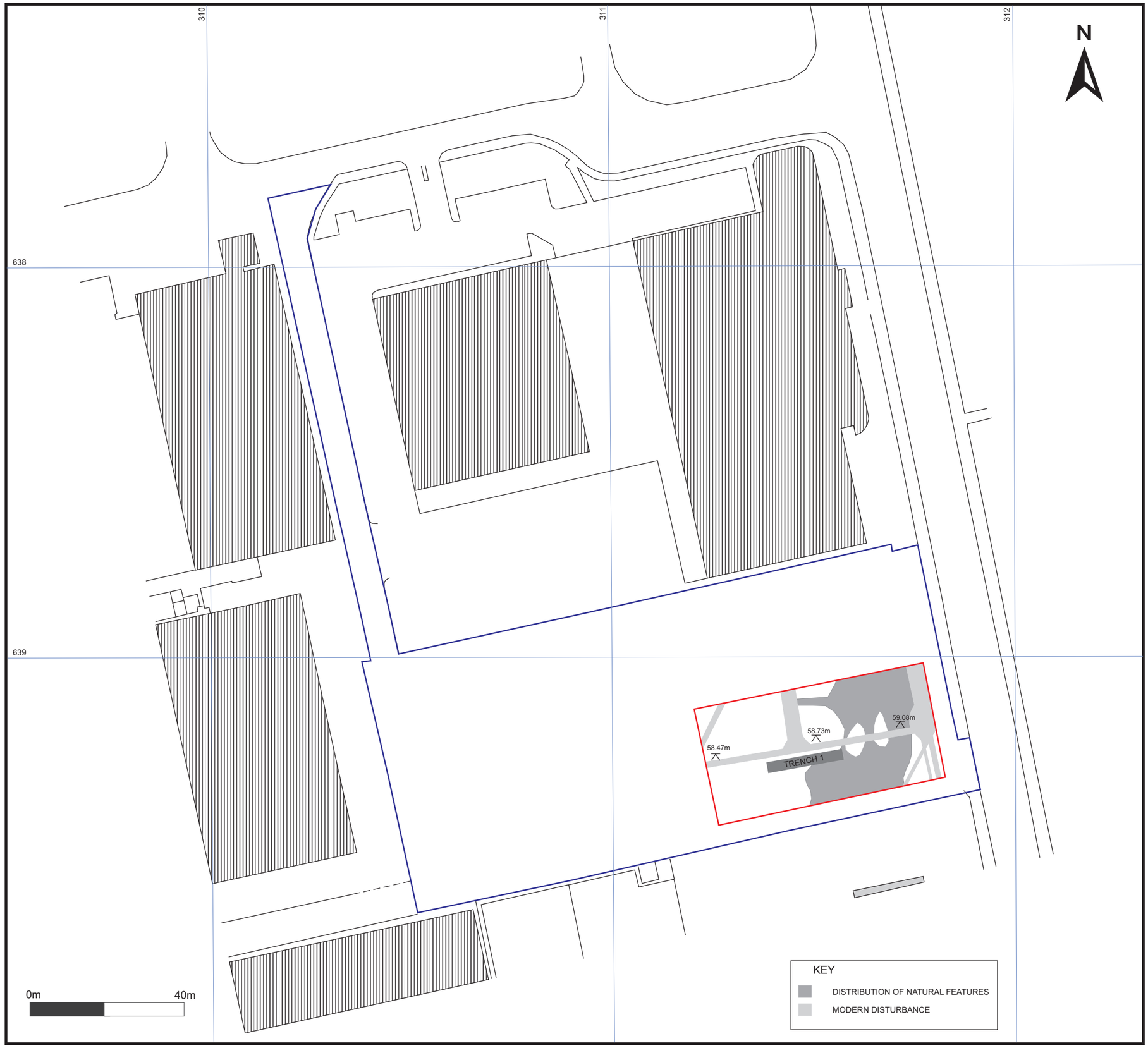

FIGURE 2: Study Area and Feature Location